

Naugatuck, 1862

a.k.a. *E. A. Stevens*

Type/Rig/Class: Steamer

Builder: H. R. Dunham, New York

Dates of Service: 1862 - 1870 (?)

Disposition: ?

Displacement: 120 tons

Length: 101'

Beam: 21' 6"

Draft: 6' (9' with water ballast)

Machinery: 2-cylinder steam engine; twin screws

Complement: ?

Armament: 1 x 100-pounder Parrott rifle; 2 x 12-pounders

Cutter History:

One of the oddest looking acquisitions ever made by the Revenue Marine was the Revenue Marine Steamer *Naugatuck* (also referred to as *Ironsides* or *E. S. Stevens* in records). She was built by H. R. Dunham of New York, possibly in 1844, and purchased by the Stevens family of Hoboken, New Jersey to test ideas for an ironclad, known as the "*Steven's Battery*," they were constructing. They apparently donated the *Naugatuck*/*E. S. Stevens* to the Revenue Marine on 12 March 1862.

Of a radical design, she was a semi-submersible ironclad, needing only 15 minutes to take on enough water ballast to sink almost 3 feet. Thus, she could enter battle with only her impenetrable turret mounting a 100-pounder rifled-Parrot gun above water. Afterwards, she could pump the water overboard again in just eight minutes flat.

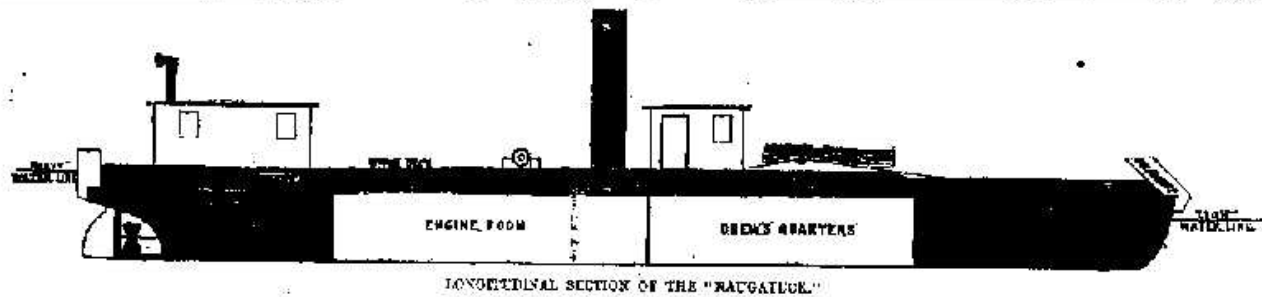
Being contemporary with the famous *Monitor* and *Virginia*, she was rushed south in hopes of tipping the balance in the Union's favor. In her first action, she served as bait for a well-laid trap. Her commanding officer, Lieutenant D. C. Constable, USRM, placed the *Naugatuck* within a quarter of a mile of the Confederate battery at Sewell's Point and bombarded it until, as planned, the *Virginia* steamed out to investigate. Lieutenant Constable then slowly retired toward a squadron of U.S. Navy steamers, amidst which lurked the *Monitor*, in hopes of trapping and destroying the Confederate ironclad. But the *Virginia* sensed danger, refused the bait, and retired.

When Norfolk fell two days later, on 10 May 1862, the *Virginia* was destroyed to prevent her falling into Union hands, and the James River was opened to the Federal fleet. Hoping to beat the Army troops under General George B. McClellan into Richmond, the navy now took a chance by sending a naval assault flotilla up the James River to try to shell the Confederate capital into submission. The Navy commander placed the USRM *Naugatuck* in the van, with the *Monitor* and the other Union ships strung out behind her, "on account of her submerging qualities and little draft of water, as in case of obstructions or torpedoes, she could, by pumping out, evade them and give warning of the danger to the rest of the fleet." Just eight miles below the glittering prize, the squadron ran into a double barrier of "spiles, steamboats, and sail vessels" blocking the James River and guarded by a strong battery on Drewry's Bluff, supported by sharp-eyed marksmen in well-dug rifle pits.

The four-hour long duel between naval and shore guns was a waste of gunpowder as far as the attackers were concerned, for victory was not possible without the support of Union soldiers ashore. When the USRM *Naugatuck's* Parrott gun exploded, "she continued in her position during the entire action, fighting her broadside guns." Although the first Union attack on Richmond had failed, Lieutenant Constable could modestly, but proudly, report: "My officers and crew behaved to my entire satisfaction." After being repaired, the USRM *Naugatuck* passed the remainder of the war guarding the approaches to New York City.

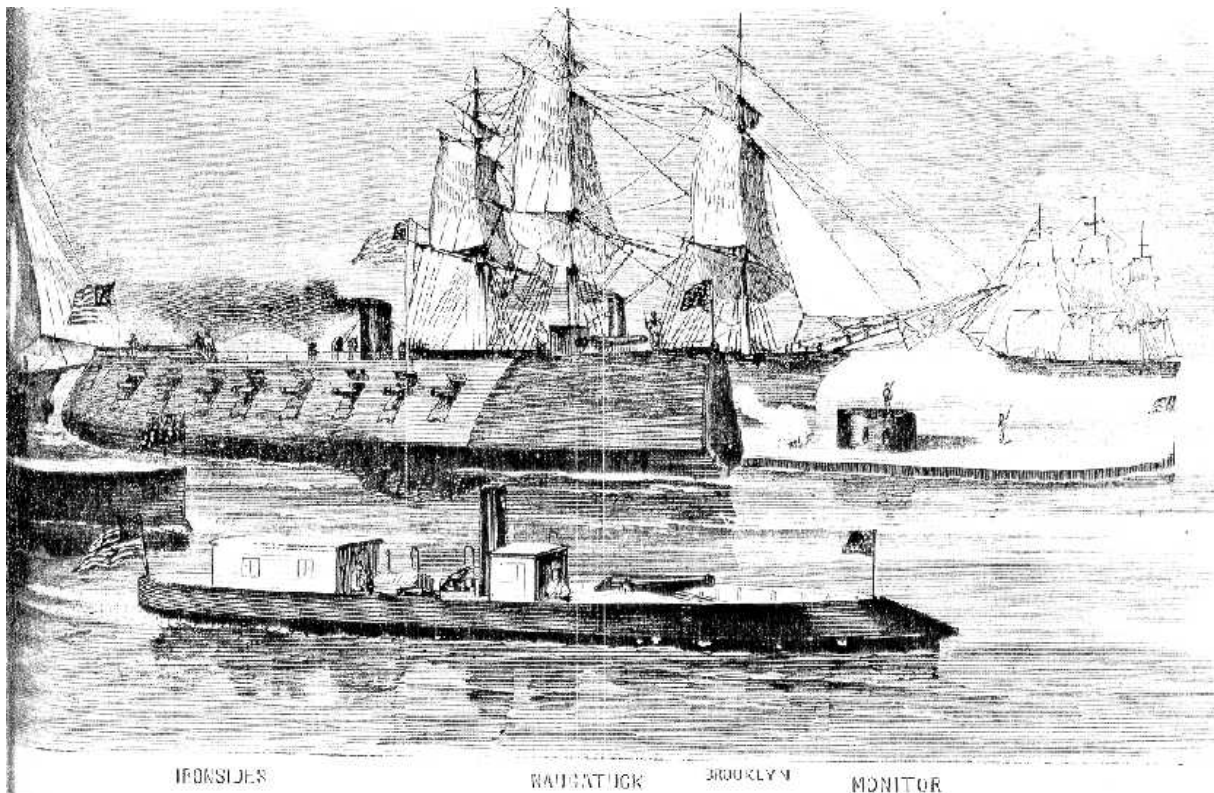
A 24 July 1863 entry in her logbook noted that "By order of Sect. Salmon P. Chase the present name of this vessel was changed and her former name, *Naugatuck*, readopted."

Her ultimate fate is unknown.



A photograph of an engraving from *Harper's Weekly* of the unique revenue "ironclad" *Naugatuck*. The engraving was first published in *Harper's Weekly* on 26 April 1862. U.S. Navy photograph, released.

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IRONCLAD

NAUGATUCK

BROOKLYN

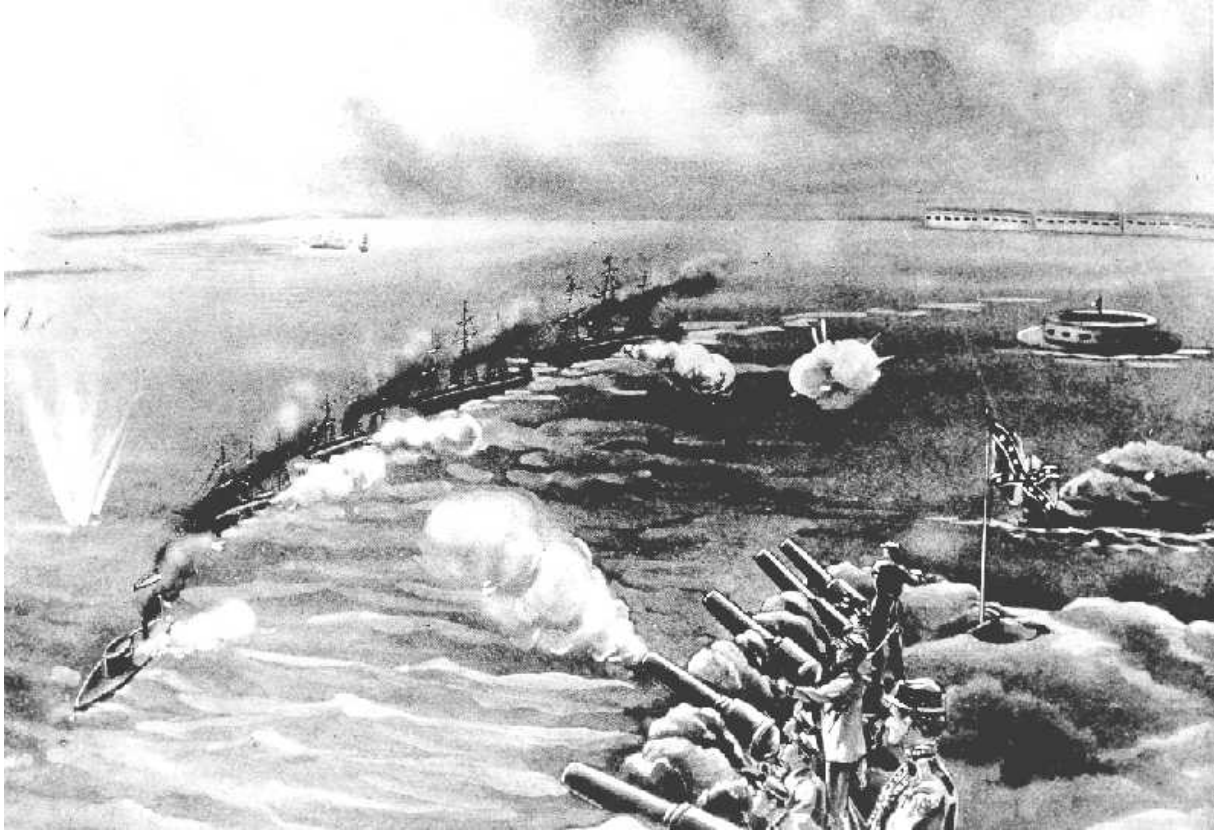
MONITOR

Engraving showing the *Naugatuck* (center foreground) along with the USS *Brooklyn* and USS *Monitor*.

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Photograph of an engraving that illustrated the bombardment of Sewell's Point by Union vessels on 8 May 1862. The cutter *Naugatuck* is the second vessel in line directly behind the USS *Monitor*, which is in the van. U.S. Navy photograph of an engraving published in Fiveash's *Virginia-Monitor Engagement*, Norfolk, 1907. Released.

After being repaired, she served as a guard ship at New York beginning in late 1862. She then served at New Bern, North Carolina after the war.

Her ultimate fate is unknown, however another vessel named *Stevens* was apparently built in Baltimore by the Revenue Marine and began service in 1872 at New Bern.

Sources:

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Donald Canney. *U.S. Coast Guard and Revenue Cutters, 1790-1935*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995.

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